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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL PREPARED PURSUANT TO RESOLUTIONS 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998) AND 1203 (1998) OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998) of 31 March 1998, 1199 (1998) of 23 September 1998 and 1203 (1998) of 24 October 1998. It covers the period since my last report of 12 November 1998 (S/1998/1068).

II. SECURITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION 1160 (1998)

2. As at 30 November 1998, a total of 53 States listed in my earlier reports (S/1998/608, S/1998/712, S/1998/834, S/1998/912 and S/1998/1068) had reported to the Committee, in accordance with paragraph 12 of resolution 1160 (1998), on the steps they had taken to give effect to the prohibitions imposed by that resolution.

3. At its meeting held on 12 November 1998, the Committee considered reports on violations of the prohibitions established by the Security Council in its resolutions 1160 (1998) and 1199 (1998) received from relevant international organizations, together with information of the same kind gathered by the Secretariat from public sources. The Committee expressed its concern at continuing serious violations of the arms embargo and other prohibitions imposed by resolutions 1160 (1998) and 1199 (1998). The Committee urged States, in particular States neighbouring the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to make every effort to comply fully with resolutions 1160 (1998) and 1199 (1998) in seeking to prevent the sale or supply to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including Kosovo, of arms and related matériel of all types and prevent any arming, training and financing of terrorist activities there. The Committee reiterated the responsibility of all States to support international efforts aimed at stabilizing the situation in Kosovo and enhancing the prospect of peace in the region by strictly observing the prohibitions contained in resolutions 1160 (1998) and 1199 (1998) and acting promptly upon their violations.

4. At its meeting on 3 December 1998, the Committee continued consideration of violations reported by regional organizations and information received from

public sources. The Committee also decided to hold informal consultations in order to submit, as appropriate, its report to the Security Council in accordance with paragraph 9 (c) of Security Council resolution 1160 (1998) and paragraph 11 of the Committee's revised guidelines for the conduct of its work.

III. COMPREHENSIVE REGIME TO MONITOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROHIBITIONS IMPOSED BY SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1160 (1998)

5. The Committee was briefed on the first consultation meeting of organizations participating in the comprehensive monitoring regime, which was convened at United Nations Headquarters on 19 October 1998. Members supported holding such meetings periodically and considered that, in the absence of a comprehensive coordinating mechanism, they could provide a useful framework for exchanging information on the monitoring of the established prohibitions and addressing practical issues arising in that connection.

IV. SITUATION IN KOSOVO

6. This section of the report deals with humanitarian and human rights aspects of the situation in Kosovo, as I recommended to the Council in my previous report. It is based on information provided by the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (see annex), the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission and individual Member States, as well as contributions provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Humanitarian situation

7. No major combat between military forces has occurred in Kosovo since the time of my last report, but the situation on the ground is still far from peaceful. Sporadic ceasefire violations were reported by both the Serbian authorities and Kosovo Albanian sources. In most cases it was impossible to identify who initiated the clashes.

8. Since the withdrawal of the Serbian police and Yugoslav military forces on 27 October the return of internally displaced persons to their homes has significantly increased. With the onset of winter, villages across Kosovo are being repopulated, as people uprooted by eight months of fighting are looking for better shelter than plastic tents in the woods, the crammed houses of friends or relatives in urban centres and rented space they could no longer afford in neighbouring countries and territories. As at 24 November, UNHCR estimates that some 75,000 displaced persons have gone back to their villages in hard-hit central and western Kosovo. About 175,000 people remained displaced within Kosovo. Many of them have returned to their villages to find their homes reduced to rubble. These returnees are forced to stay in the houses of their more fortunate neighbours and thus are still displaced, albeit within their own villages.

9. A trickle of several refugee families from northern Albania have returned to Kosovo's western frontier villages. Albania hosts some 24,000 refugees from Kosovo. Lawlessness and bandit attacks on aid agencies in the northern Albanian district of Tropoja have created a precarious security situation, in view of which some of the approximately 2,500 refugees located there decided to return home for lack of other options. UNHCR is working to relocate such refugees to safer areas within Albania, thus avoiding involuntary returns.

10. The Montenegrin Red Cross reported that, as at 24 November, it had provided assistance to some 34,000 internally displaced persons; however, UNHCR believes that the number is now closer to 30,000. Some 10,000 to 12,000 internally displaced persons have returned from Montenegro to Kosovo, but it is impossible to estimate at this time how many have remained there. Many internally displaced persons have returned again to Montenegro, others have gone to Albania or have moved to Western Europe. Only upon receiving the November distribution figures will it be possible to have a more accurate count of the displaced persons still in Montenegro. It will also take a few weeks to establish with more certainty the whereabouts of those displaced persons that have departed from Montenegro.

11. The return process is fragile, and those returning home often sleep with their belongings still packed beside them. Many families come only during the daylight hours, returning to their host families each evening. The fluidity of the movement back makes it almost impossible for the humanitarian organizations to accurately assess the number of people returning at present, but it appears that the number of returnees is growing and that the number living with host families will continue to decrease.

12. At the end of each month, UNHCR and the humanitarian organizations in Kosovo will hold meetings to assess the number of internally displaced persons and returnees inside Kosovo. These meetings will be attended by UNHCR staff from Montenegro and Albania, where information can be shared and the actual numbers more accurately counted.

Obstacles to returns

13. Uncertainty and continuing danger appear to be the main deterrent to returns. People who have returned spontaneously have done so mainly in search of survival during the expected harsh winter months. In the villages where internally displaced persons have gone back, many have prepared just one room to endure winter conditions.

14. Returns continue to be tentative and little permanent reconstruction is being undertaken. Returnees hesitate to put money into something that they fear they may well lose later. In the towns, businessmen appear to be holding back on investments, awaiting signs that a political settlement may be forthcoming.

15. In many cases, the internally displaced persons have returned to find their houses totally destroyed, prompting them to remain in the towns, where they feel they can at least be assured of continuing relief aid. Another major factor preventing returns is damaged infrastructure - lack of schools, no electricity and polluted wells.

16. International monitors observe increased returns of displaced persons to areas located in Malisevo, Orahovac, Suva Reka, Djakovica, Decani and Drenica municipalities. However, during the reporting period, in the wake of skirmishes between the government forces and Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units, renewed displacement was reported in areas such as Malisevo, south of Komorane and Lapusnik.

Confidence-building for returnees

17. Most returnees say they will feel more secure when teams of the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission are around them. They anxiously await the arrival of the monitors of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission.

18. Where the presence of the Observer Mission is most visible, substantial returns have taken place. For example, between 70 and 100 per cent returns have been reported in the villages of Dragobilje, Ostrozub, Banja, Dobrodeljane and Pagarusa. The Mission has either maintained an outpost or conducted regular patrols in those villages, which have a combined population of more than 10,000. The same is true of seven villages in the Suva Reka region. Since the Mission began to deploy there, 13,000 of the 30,000 residents have returned.

Aid and shelter programmes

19. UNHCR, together with the World Food Programme and the non-governmental organization community, is continuing to provide aid to the displaced and returnee populations. The frequency of UNHCR-escorted convoys has increased to six days per week. During the third week of November, 120 trucks provided food and non-food assistance for 100,000 beneficiaries in 21 different locations.

20. UNHCR has satellite offices in Pec, Prizren and Mitrovica. Coordination of food and non-food assistance will be decentralized and the number of convoys per week is expected to increase to over 150 trucks by the beginning of December.

21. The UNHCR-non-governmental organization shelter assessment of 2-4 November covered 285 villages, of which 210 had been damaged by the conflict. Nearly 40 per cent of the homes were found to be habitable, requiring basic shelter materials - tiles, bricks, windows - which the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia should provide, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1199 (1998).

Security

22. A ceasefire called last month has generally held, although there have been arbitrary detentions, killings and kidnappings blamed on both Serbian security forces and the Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units. For the first time in the conflict, self-appointed groups on both sides of the ethnic divide have taken part in these actions, threatening to unravel the fragile peace.

23. Although security checkpoints were dismantled following the 27 October pullback, police continued to control checkpoints on highways, moving to less visible positions on strategic hills. Mobile checkpoints have been established by Serbian security forces and Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units. These have

not impeded the access of staff or vehicles of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights during this reporting period. However, at traffic checkpoints established by Serbian police, the Office has both directly observed and received reports of the questioning and search of passengers on regular intercity bus lines. While the pullback has resulted in freer movement, fear of being accosted on the street by police remains.

24. Security remains tight in villages along the border with Albania, where illegal traffic in arms and movement of members of Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units continue. Recently, troops detained an entire village population for 24 hours while they conducted a house-to-house search for weapons.

25. In the meantime, Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units have taken over checkpoints left by Serbian police in the interior villages, provoking incursions by Serbian armoured vehicles and triggering occasional gun battles. In many villages, members of Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units returned with the villagers - often their own family members - and acted as protectors. However, they seem to be in no mood to resume full-scale fighting and are battening down for the winter, as are the Serbian police.

Human rights

26. The situation of human rights in Kosovo continues to be characterized by the abduction and arbitrary detention of persons, as well as reports of summary execution of persons detained. Reports of systematic severe ill-treatment of persons in police detention and pre-trial detention continue.

27. In November the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights devoted all its country-wide staff resources to monitoring court proceedings in Kosovo against persons charged with terrorism, violating or endangering constitutional order or contributing to anti-state activity. Over a month after the accord of 13 October between the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic, and the United States Special Envoy, Richard Holbrooke, implementation of the last two points of the accord, which concern prosecution in state courts, remains unclear. The Serbian Minister of Justice has sent teams of prosecutors to district courts in Kosovo to examine individual cases, and court officials have confirmed to the Office of the High Commissioner that they have participated in working sessions with representatives of the Serbian Ministry of Justice and the office of the President of Serbia. The Ministry of Justice, together with the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the office of the President of Serbia, have solicited the cooperation of the Office of the High Commissioner in the ongoing resolution of individual cases and categories of cases pending in Kosovo to which the Office or the Special Rapporteur have drawn particular attention. These efforts have resulted in the release of several individuals from pre-trial detention and/or detention pending appeal, but new arrests, trials and sentencing continue. Kosovo Albanian media have taken an intense interest in reports of the ill-treatment of detainees and in the court proceedings themselves, particularly the potential application of "paraffin glove evidence". To the knowledge of the Office of the High Commissioner, however, no clear position has been enunciated by the Kosovo Albanian political leadership on amnesty or pardon for detainees. The Kosovo

Albanian defence attorneys continue to pursue strongly the interest of their individual clients, as cases come up for trial.

28. The Office of the High Commissioner concentrated its efforts in the district courts of Prizren and Pec, where the bulk of armed activity has occurred and approximately 1,350 cases are pending, far exceeding the number of cases in the courts of Kosovska Mitrovica, Pristina and Gnjilane combined. The district court in Prizren, which had been holding trials related to allegations of terrorism and anti-state activity on a regular daily basis, suspended trials from 31 October to 9 November so that, according to the court president, case review could be conducted. The district court in Pec, however, has continued to hold up to four trials a day, except when weather or security conditions have prevented the transport of defendants to court. The Office of the High Commissioner has to date recorded 92 completed decisions of courts of first instance throughout Kosovo, but that figure is by no means comprehensive and only includes court documents at hand. Of that number, nearly all decisions have been convictions, with eight acquittals. Sentences range from 60 days to 13 years, with the majority of sentences from two to five years. For sentences of less than five years, until they have been confirmed by a court of a final instance, detention is not mandatory during the appeal process, but most so sentenced have been detained.

29. The number of persons in actual custody is difficult to obtain, as "custody" includes persons in pre-arraignment detention by Serbian police, under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior, and investigative or post-sentencing detention, under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice. On a massive scale, Serbian security officials in Kosovo have arrested and held in police detention large numbers of individuals for periods ranging from several hours to several days. The routine police "screening" of male returnees, however, has abated in recent weeks. Persons in police detention are routinely held incommunicado, without access to attorneys, longer than the three-plus-one days of pre-arraignment detention allowed by law. Their families are not informed of their arrest or of their release from police detention. The number of persons subsequently arraigned and held in investigative detention is unclear, as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is not routinely and regularly informed of arraignments by the Ministry of Justice. As a result, the Office of the High Commissioner can only estimate, as have the Serbian Minister of Justice and defence attorneys, that from 1,500 to 1,900 cases are pending on charges related to terrorism, anti-state activity and/or aiding and abetting such activity. This does not include persons in police detention or persons called for "informative talks" by the police, whose number is absolutely unknown and whose names are known only anecdotally or when reported by non-governmental organizations.

30. Since the accord of 13 October and the Agreement of 16 October, information on the activity of Kosovo Albanian paramilitary "tribunals" has become public. The activity of the "tribunals" suggests a pattern of arbitrary arrest and summary execution. On 30 October, two League of Democratic Kosova activists were "arrested" by the Kosovo Albanian paramilitaries in Malisevo and have been "charged" with advocating the surrender of weapons to Serbian authorities. On 3 November, the "KLA Military Police Directorate" issued a communiqué stating that the two men had been arrested and were "under interrogation". The

communiqué also acknowledged that two additional individuals had been executed and that Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units were seeking to arrest a member of the presidency of the League of Democratic Kosova. On 31 October, in "policing" activities, members of Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units arrested three men and killed a fourth near Podujevo for "alleged criminal activity".

31. On 1 November, a "Military Court" of Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units sentenced two abducted Tanjug journalists to 60 days of detention for "having committed violations and ignorance of the internal regular civilian-military book of regulations of the KLA, chapter VIII, respectively the military police book of regulations, item 5, page 27". Representatives of international agencies, including ICRC and the Office of the High Commissioner in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, have not been allowed to visit the abductees.

32. On 9 November, in Srbica, Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units abducted the third and fourth Serb civilians taken since mid-October, Zlatan Ivanovic and Bojan Pavlovic. In retaliation, on the evening of 11 November, family members of the victims and villagers from Leposavic organized the arbitrary detention of roughly 25 Kosovo Albanian passengers from an intercity bus. It is reported that the detention occurred with the knowledge of Serbian police who, at a minimum, did not intervene to stop it. During the night of 11 November, all but seven of the passengers were released; the seven were held in exchange for the two abducted Serbs. On 12 November, through the intervention of the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission, an exchange took place.

33. On 17 November, near Podujevo, members of Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units abducted a Serbian police officer, Goran Zbiljic. In the same area on the same day, a Kosovo Albanian, Hakif Hoti, was also abducted. On 23 November, Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units issued a communiqué stating that it had "arrested" Mr. Zbiljic and other Albanian "collaborators". On 24 November, through the actions of the Observer Mission, Mr. Zbiljic was released. Nothing is known about the fate of Mr. Hoti or other Serb, Albanian and Roma civilians and police officers abducted by armed Kosovo Albanians.

34. The Yugoslav authorities have reportedly authorized the team of Finnish experts acting under the European Union auspices to start investigations at six locations in Kosovo and in any other locations where forensic investigation proves to be justified. The choice of places, however, remains the prerogative of the Serb authorities since the forensic investigation, as part of the criminal investigation in general, can be initiated only on the basis of a Court order issued by an investigating judge.

V. OBSERVATIONS

35. After eight months of fighting, there are indications that displaced persons and refugees from Kosovo have begun returning to their homes, many destroyed. This is a difficult process and the United Nations agencies on the ground are making every effort to assist in the restoration of normal life in Kosovo. These activities, however, require close cooperation with the Kosovo Verification Mission and the support of the international community.

36. The extent to which the internally displaced persons and refugees are willing to return to their homes still varies by area. The reluctance to return permanently is mainly due to Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units and security forces remaining concentrated in certain areas, thus posing the potential of continuing clashes. Among other constraints hampering the return process are mines and booby traps and the destruction of utilities and dwellings. However, it is to be hoped that, as a result of the ceasefire, the increased international presence in the region and unhindered humanitarian assistance, the rate of returns will accelerate.

37. Nevertheless, humanitarian efforts cannot be an alternative to the political process. I am therefore concerned that, after the end of major hostilities in Kosovo, the advance towards a political solution remains slow. I commend the efforts of Ambassador Christopher Hill of the United States and of the Contact Group, and call upon the parties to engage in a meaningful dialogue aimed at finding a peaceful settlement in Kosovo to benefit all its people.

38. It is evident that the relative tranquillity in Kosovo is very deceptive. It is neither stable, nor irreversible. According to various reports, members of the Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units, which have been reappearing in greater numbers throughout Kosovo, seem to be motivated, well armed and ready for renewed action. The Government has enough security forces in the area to launch a new crack-down should these units engage in provocative actions. I urge all parties concerned to show restraint so as not to undermine the efforts for a political settlement.

39. Abductions and arbitrary arrests, coupled with fear of such actions, pose the most dangerous potential threats to the security and human rights of all persons in Kosovo. I strongly urge the Serbian authorities to stop the practice of arbitrary arrests and to cooperate fully with the international community in the field of human rights. I also urge Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units to immediately release all abductees without any preconditions.

40. As earlier stated, it is expected that the early deployment of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission will be a critical factor in building the confidence necessary for the return of those who fled their homes in the past months. It will also greatly assist in providing the Security Council with cogent information on the situation in the region. I hope that the Verification Mission will have taken over the reporting responsibility on the situation in Kosovo, other than on humanitarian and human rights questions, by the time another report is due.

Annex

Information on the situation in Kosovo and measures taken by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, submitted pursuant to paragraph 13 of Security Council resolution 1160 (1998) (October/November 1998)

General situation

1. The period since the last report, of 20 October, has been calm, without major operations being undertaken by Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) forces. Sporadic skirmishes and incidents of hostage-taking have occurred and tension has increased accordingly in many areas.

2. During the early part of the period, military activity was observed in western Kosovo between the towns of Pec, Gjakova and Dakovica. This area, adjacent to the Albanian border, has been an area of heavy fighting since the beginning of June. On 16 October, amid clear indications of withdrawal of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia security forces, the KLA "General Staff" announced a unilateral ceasefire but stated that it would also respond to any provocation.

3. Special Yugoslav police units were still present all over the province mostly on main roads, in the Drenica and Maljiševo areas, but in significantly decreased numbers. Federal Republic of Yugoslavia forces adopted a more discreet stance with troops hiding in the woods and mobile patrols. Many checkpoints were still in place and manned, particularly south-east of Kosovo and in the Drenica region. Freedom of movement was affected in some areas: Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission staff were prevented from entering a military base near Kosovska Mitrovica, and denied access to western regions by KLA forces near Glogovac. In the Shala region (the triangle between Kosovska, Mitrovica, Podujevo and Vucitrn) an Observer Mission team was stopped and denied onward access by the KLA.

4. KLA presence has become more significant in many areas over the last fortnight. KLA fighters were allegedly reported in the Orahovac area and in the Rugova Canyon, west of Pec. KLA seem to be filling the vacuum left by departing Federal Republic of Yugoslavia forces: many of them were spotted in abandoned MUP positions.

5. The ceasefire was violated several times in November through incidents such as an attack on mineworkers in Grabovac, a shoot-out between a heavily-armed KLA patrol and police resulting in five dead KLA members, attacks on the Maljiševo and Orahovac police stations and the burning of a school in Sipitula (west of Priština) with mutual accusations flying between Serb security forces and local Albanian population.

6. During the reporting period, the presence of large numbers of security forces, increasing tension and clashes were reported in the Dragobilje area, although it appeared difficult to establish who was responsible. The situation in Maljiševo remained tense with Serb security forces and Kosovo Albanians

blaming each other for sporadic shootings. The situation was complicated by the arrest of two leading members of the League of Democratic Kosova chapter in Maljiševo by KLA on 30 October. In small villages in the area of Pec an increasing number of cases of harassment, arbitrary arrest and intimidation were reported.

7. The situation on the northern border of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Kosovo) has remained stable and calm throughout the reporting period. All border crossings have continued to function normally. There have been no significant incidents; illegal crossing and smuggling have remained at a lower level than at any time since independence, attributable in large part to the presence of Yugoslav security forces on the northern part of the border of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. On the western border with Albania there has been no substantive change in the pattern of activity. Periodic incidents continue to occur of attempted illegal entry by small groups from Albania, sometimes armed, which sometimes engage Macedonian security forces, and are sometimes fired upon. The arrival of the first winter snow can be expected to dampen activity.

The situation of the civilian population

8. By the end of October, the Head of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia indicated that the fear of winter had forced some 30,000 internally displaced persons to return to their homes and repair them before the winter, in spite of security fears. It is estimated that some 10,000 internally displaced persons still remain exposed in the open on high ground. Internally displaced persons accommodated in other people's homes are estimated at 60,000 in Priština, 42,000 in Kosovska Mitrovica and 20,636 in the Pec area. In some cases, such as a camp in the area of Kormorane with an estimated 1,500 internally displaced persons, people spend the day in their villages rebuilding, returning to the camp at night.

9. Refugee returns are occurring but trends vary according to region. In some villages south-east of Maljiševo approximately 90 per cent of the population has returned; but the area closest to the Albanian border and to Junik remains deserted, as do all the small villages to the east. There are no signs of spontaneous return of refugees.

10. Urgently required aid has been delivered by UNHCR and all other agencies at a rate of 14 convoys a week, supplying some 100,000 internally displaced persons. Humanitarian agencies have encountered considerable problems, many of which centre on security fears and trust among the internally displaced persons. An incident that typifies the precarious situation occurred on 23 October, when, for the first time in the experience of UNHCR in Kosovo, an aid convoy came under KLA fire in a case of mistaken identity.

11. A medical team assessed the general health situation of people living in Kosovo as very poor. Owing to the conflict situation and subsequent collapse of medical supplies and availability of treatment, especially in the rural areas, a significant increase of various infectious diseases is to be expected.

12. Another issue of concern is that of missing persons, whether ethnic Albanians or Serbs. In this respect the International Committee of the Red Cross in Kosovo has drawn attention to 119 missing Serbs.

Refugee influx

13. A significant number of refugees have continued to enter Albania via Montenegro, while in the north-east of Albania very few refugees were reported to have crossed into the country. This is thought to be a result of the first heavy snowfalls, which are making for very harsh winter conditions, the increased number of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia patrols in the area and reports of newly laid mines.

14. By the end of October, UNHCR claimed that an average 12 refugees were still crossing the border each day and the number of refugees in Kukes, Has and Zogaj was 1,106. The deployment of the Kosovo Verification Mission has brought demands for early repatriation from refugees who remain in the north of the country who are extremely wary of returning without solid guarantees for their security. Still, some of the registered refugees voiced their intention to stay in Albania during the winter months.

15. The inadequate security situation in the Tropoje district continues to seriously hamper the registration process of refugees, a prerequisite for their continued aid. The situation of refugees in the area is deteriorating, little aid has arrived in the district since September, and locals have stolen previous supplies. Action to improve the security situation in the district by the appropriate Albanian authorities is considered grossly inadequate.

16. The current number of refugees from Kosovo in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is 2,800, although the figure is difficult to verify. The number of Kosovars visiting and staying on a temporary or extended footing with friends or relatives has remained broadly stable. The great majority of those staying wish to remain out of public view, shun officialdom and appear to wish to return to Kosovo as soon as they judge it is safe to do so. There has been little sign to date of any significant number returning.

Kosovo conflict spillover potential

17. The OSCE presence in Albania, the OSCE spillover mission to Skopje and the OSCE missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to Croatia have been instructed to continue to follow closely the spillover potential of the Kosovo conflict.

18. OSCE monitors in Albania observed convoys of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia security vehicles regrouping and moving in the border area, suggesting that some elements have withdrawn from there. Despite these withdrawals heavy border patrolling continued, especially in traditional refugee crossing points, in the north-east and north of the country.

19. Additional mines have been laid by Federal Republic of Yugoslavia forces and an increased number of people have been killed or injured by newly laid mines. Laying of mines is seen as an attempt to limit the activity of the KLA, and is regarded as provocative at a time when the peace process is at an

embryonic stage and does nothing to instill hope in the refugees who wish to return to their homes.

20. Movement and training of fighters continue to be observed in the north-eastern border areas of Albania, and it is apparent that cross-border activity is continuing, albeit more limited than in the past, owing to the heavy presence of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia forces. There have been a number of actions inside the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and some wounded fighters were being treated later in local Albanian hospitals.

21. A number of border incidents have occurred during the reporting period, sometimes triggered by KLA activity. One incursion by a Federal Republic of Yugoslavia patrol was reported as being a kilometre inside Albanian territory. Another border incident occurred on 1 November when the Serb forces fired several mortar rounds at Koshara BP and one round landed on the Albanian side of the border.

22. Albanian Prime Minister Majko, while following the policy established by his predecessor, Mr. Nano, has been introducing some changes in the Government's public approach to the Kosovo issue. Pointing out that the Albanian State will not play an active role in giving advice to the Kosovo Albanian people to find their political identity, Mr. Majko stressed indirectly the idea of an ethnic Albanian solution as an offer for the Albanians in Kosovo. Nevertheless, the Kosovo crisis is far from being the dominant topic in Albanian politics, which focused on the International Conference on Albania, called by the Government of Albania under the auspices of "Friends of Albania" (a group co-chaired by OSCE and European Union), held on 30 October, the first large gathering of this nature since the traumatic events of early 1997.

23. Law and order enforcement in the north-east of Albania remained extremely weak and the continuing lack of government control in the region is still a source of serious concern also in the context of the Kosovo crisis.

24. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the situation in the northern border with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia remained mostly calm during the reporting period. In a shooting on 11 November, a Macedonian border patrol killed an Albanian male on the border between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania. The potential risks of spillover from Kosovo to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are, however, at the moment regarded as slight, in particular in view of the increase in troops of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force from 850 to 1,050 and the stationing of the NATO "Extraction Force" on Macedonian territory in support of the Kosovo Verification Mission.

25. During the campaign for the second round of the parliamentary elections, the crisis in Kosovo was a dominant issue and the leading coalition, VMRO-DPMNE/DA, continue to stress its commitment to dealing with the problems of the economy as a first priority. Macedonian officials said that the government had a basic policy of an "equal relationship" with all neighbours and that regional cooperation was to be promoted to achieve its objectives. Speaking of rumours of Macedonian Albanians joining the KLA, an official stated that Albanians were well integrated in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The attitude of people in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia can best be described as "apprehensive", owing to the problems in neighbouring countries, but neither of the ethnic groups is militant.

26. Referring to the explosions in Gostivar, Skopje, Kumanovo and Prilep, the Minister of the Interior reported that 12 persons of Albanian origin were arrested and that direct material evidence had been found, as well as supplies of weapons. Press speculation was that the KLA were responsible but the Interior Ministry confirmed that the 12 were members of an interior group associated to radical political parties inside the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and connected with foreign countries.

Measures taken by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

27. Following negotiations between Ambassador Holbrooke and President Milosevic, the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia signed two agreements designed to verify compliance with Security Council resolution 1199 (1998) of 23 September which called, inter alia, for a cessation of hostilities in Kosovo. On 15 October an agreement was concluded between the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and NATO that permitted unarmed NATO aircraft to fly over Kosovo. An agreement between OSCE and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was then signed on 16 October between the Chairman-in-Office, Bronislaw Geremek, and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Minister of Foreign Affairs Jovanovic, agreeing to the establishment of an OSCE Verification Mission. The Permanent Council of OSCE declared "the preparedness of OSCE to embark on verification duties related to compliance of all parties in Kosovo" in its decision 259.

28. OSCE study teams have since undertaken detailed examinations to establish the operational requirements of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission. The Verification Mission Support Unit, consisting of planning, personnel, logistics and communications cells, was formed in Vienna. The working groups produced the concept of operations document, which was approved by the Head of Mission, Ambassador William Walker, who first visited Pristina on 22 October and permanently took up his duties there on 11 November 1998.

29. The Verification Mission's immediate financial requirements were covered by the OSCE Contingency Fund and a spending authority allocated by the Secretary-General. The OSCE Permanent Council, in its decision 266 of 11 November, authorized the 1998 budget for the Mission in the amount of ATS 756,530,264. This enabled the Mission to make the major investments required this year; it additionally enabled augmentation of the secretariat's departments in Vienna.

30. The Verification Mission's advance headquarters has been established in Pristina, and Norway has assumed the responsibility for providing initial staffing and communications links. The Activation Unit has been replaced by Mission staff. A training location (the Kosovo Verification Mission Induction Centre) has been identified in Brezovica, outside Pristina, where three-day training courses will begin on 23 November for OSCE verifiers.

31. Cooperation between the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission, humanitarian and other international organizations is a key ingredient of the Mission's concept

of operations. The successful outcome of the Mission depends largely on coordination at headquarters level and close collaboration in the field.

32. NATO has a pivotal role in supporting the implementation of the mandate and underpinning the Mission's security plan; a number of meetings have taken place between the two organizations in Brussels and in Vienna.

33. An early example of this kind of cooperation is the target-oriented meeting organized by the OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw on 5 November 1998 to bring together international and humanitarian organizations, non-governmental organizations and OSCE institutions for an exchange of views on this subject.

34. On 5 November the Chairman-in-Office of OSCE, Bronislaw Geremek, received in Warsaw Ambassador William Graham Walker, head of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission. During the meeting it was agreed that, at this stage of Verification Mission planning, the main concern is to assure the security of Mission personnel on the ground. Minister Geremek emphasized his strong support to Ambassador Walker and provided him with his view on the major problems regarding deployment of the OSCE verifiers in Kosovo. He underlined the need for cooperation with the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and NATO, as well as immediate deployment of the personnel in Kosovo.

35. The same day the Chairman-in-Office of OSCE, accompanied by Ambassador Walker, met with the deputies of the Kosovo Verification Mission and delivered them their nominations.

36. Preparations for the deployment of the Mission were going relatively well. By the date of the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Oslo, that is by 2 December, the aim is to have around 800 verifiers on the ground in Kosovo, with further deployment capacity of 200 to 250 a week. Allowing for Christmas and the New Year, by mid-January the Mission should reach 1,500 to 1,600 personnel. By mid-November, the leadership group of the Mission was already in the field.

37. The following international Kosovo Verification Mission and Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission personnel are already present on the ground in Kosovo:

Kosovo Verification Mission headquarters:	50 personnel and 11 soft-skinned vehicles
Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission:	
United States:	183 personnel and 13 armoured vehicles
European Union:	30 personnel and 13 armoured vehicles
Russian Federation:	17 personnel and 3 soft-skinned vehicles

United Kingdom:	50 personnel and 20 armoured vehicles
France:	15 personnel and 8 armoured vehicles
Kosovo Verification Mission Induction Centre:	12 personnel and 2 soft-skinned vehicles

38. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is making all efforts to verify Yugoslav compliance with Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998) and 1203 (1998), as well as in supporting the establishment of proper political conditions to start unconditional peace negotiations between the parties to the conflict.